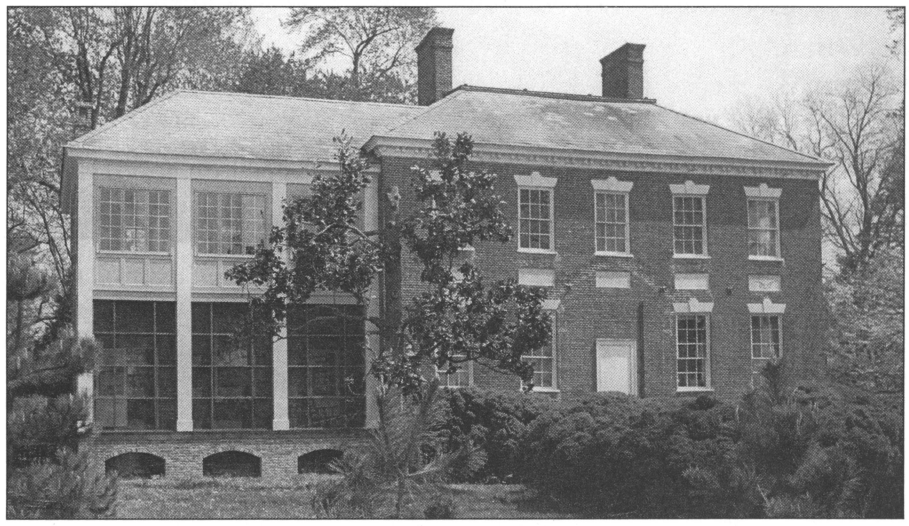
Shoreline
Vol. 18 • October/November 2011
For the Members of the Edward H. Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture at Salisbury University

The Origins of Beckford House

By Beth Carmean

The estate of Beckford, the bedrock of Princess Anne in Somerset County, MD, began as a patent for 500 acres. As it is situated on the Manokin River, the name 'Beckford' was more than likely contrived from the old word beck, meaning "creek," and ford, "a shallow wading place." The estate is located on one of the more shallow portions of the river.



Beckford, located in Princess Anne, MD, was listed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1974.

The original 500-acre patent was given to Ambrose Croutch. It was issued in June 1664 and was appropriately named 'Croutch's Choice.' There is no record, however, of any residential dwelling being constructed during Croutch's ownership.

Following Ambrose Croutch's death, the 500 acres were included in a 10,000 acre survey completed by Colonel William Stevens in 1679. In 1681, the original 500 acres were then assigned to Edmund Howard, who was the first to name the property 'Beckford.' Again, no record of a homestead can be found for this time period. Howard, in turn, sold the property to Peter Dent on March 1, 1697 for the price of 20,000 pounds of tobacco. Dent can be credited with building the first residential dwelling on the property, but the exact location of the structure is unknown. Peter Dent's daughter, Rebecca, along with her husband David Brown, then inherited the property in 1711.

On March 13, 1732, the Maryland General Assembly passed "An Act for the Erecting a Town [sic] near the Head of the Manokin River, on the South Side thereof, in Somerset County; and for laying into Lots, Twenty-five Acres of Land." This measure established Princess Anne Town, now known simply as Princess Anne. The act divided the parcel into lots to be offered for purchase to anyone in Somerset County, with the stipulation that a residential dwelling would be constructed within 18 months. There were certain criteria the buildings had to have, however, such as being a minimum of 400 square feet and having at least one chimney. The act further stated that any unclaimed lots after a period of seven years would revert to the original owners. It is known that 16 of the 25 lots were secured.

The land requested for the town was owned by Rebecca Dent Brown. Due to this, the Browns were offered first choice in lot selection. They chose lots two and three, and built a cottage on one of them in 1733. Following David Brown's death, Rebecca married James Anderson, who owned seven of the lots, and their son John inherited the property in 1745. During this year, a new survey of the property was ordered by the Maryland General Assembly due to the fact that the lots had changed so much over the years – their boundaries were nearly impossible for even the owners to determine. When John came of age in 1759, he owned 14 additional lots and offered them for sale. The last lot sold was the original Beckford property.

John Anderson never occupied the property owned by Rebecca and James, and he subsequently sold it in 1771 to Henry Jackson, a wealthy merchant and planter. It was Jackson who, in 1776, built the house that now stands. He named it 'Beckford' after the original grant given to Edmund Howard by Lord Baltimore in 1681.

There is some speculation over the house's actual year of construction. While many unofficial records suggest 1776, local architectural historian Paul Baker Touart believes it was not built until the 1800s. It is possible that the original house was built as early as 1776, but then was expanded in later years. One indication that the house may have been extended can be found in the basement. Upon inspection of the foundation, the back section of the house does not appear to have used the same type of construction materials, as in brick walls as opposed to wood and plaster.

Details of Beckford's history during the 19th century are scarce. In 1803, the land and house were deeded to John Dennis. Dennis served six terms as congressman. He was also Jackson's brother-in-law, a fact that perhaps explains why the property was left to him. Eighty-three years later, in 1886, Beckford was then sold to Henry Fillmore Lankford, a lawyer. After his death, Lankford's son, Henry Lankford Jr., took over the estate. The house was then willed to James T. Williams though he never

Continued on pg. 2

Delmarva Church Plates: A Reason to Commemorate

By Lindsay Maddux

Some may say "plates are only good for eating," but plates can also be used to commemorate the past. Think of the popular habit of transferring pictures to coffee mugs as memorabilia; churches, too, used a similar method to celebrate their existence. Research has not produced answers as to when this tradition of creating and collecting church plates started, but even today the habit of creating and collecting commemorative plates continues. A range of types of commemorative plates is available today, but the antique church, historic homes and school plates at the Nabb Research Center are arguably among the most enticing. They represent and celebrate the past through depicting sites on Delmarva.

Commemorative plate from St. Mary the Virgin, Pocomoke City, MD.

Although some plates have curvy ornate edges, most are cream-colored, with smooth edges and a raised grapevine or floral design on the rim of the plate. Underneath the glazed finish, there are illustrations of architecture: a church, mansion or school. For the most part, the depictions are in black and white, and they are very detailed, showing the intricacies of the brick structure, chimney, steeple or surrounding trees. Some plates give the location, founder and date of establishment; whereas, others simply give the name of the structure. None of the plates give a production date, but based on research, many of these plates were probably made during the 1950s or 1960s.

The Nabb Center plates came from a variety of collections: five are from Larry R. Allen, five are from Asbury United Methodist Church in Salisbury, MD, and the other nine are from various donors. Variety in sources indicates that these plates were well-liked, not only because they were kept, but also because a variety of them were collected. The locations of the churches depicted are varied; some are Delmarva villages, like the All Hallows Episcopal Church in Snow Hill, MD (est. 1692), while others are a prominent location like Wicomico Presbyterian Church in Salisbury, MD (est. 1688).

Of the structures on the various plates at the Nabb Center, most of the places depicted are still standing today. These places include: Teackle Mansion in Princess Anne, MD (1801), the Masonic Temple in Crisfield, MD (1915); Poplar Hill Mansion in Salisbury, MD (c. 1795); St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Mardela Springs, MD (1952); St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Princess Anne, MD (1770); St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Berlin, MD; St. Mary the Virgin in Pocomoke City, MD (1845); and Rehoboth Presbyterian Church in Rehoboth, MD (1683). In fact, the only no longer existing structure among these plates is that of the former building of Washington High School in Princess Anne, MD (1892).

Unfortunately, there is not a lot of information about these plates, other than the artifacts themselves. Still, we can make connections as to what these plates meant to their collectors. Creamware plates may have adorned the walls of church halls and kitchens or may have been placed in people's houses. Regardless of their locations, a glance at the church plates clearly represented a pride in belonging to a particular church; the historic home plates may have evoked awe in a person who helped build the mansion, knew a resident of the mansion, or even lived in the mansion; and the plate from Washington High School is a connection to a school that once changed lives but is now non-existent. Even though these plates are now safely wrapped and stored away in archival containers, nothing can ever take away what these structures meant to their collectors.

Lindsay Maddux is an English major and former Nabb Center intern.

Continued from cover

occupied it. Shortly after he took ownership of the property, Williams ran an advertisement in *The Marylander and Herald* newspaper in March 1973. The ad was for a public auction of belongings in the house, including pieces of original furniture. The house was then sold to Mr. and Mrs. Freedom Ainsworth later that year.

Though many of the windows were broken and the house was certainly worn down by time and vandalism, Freedom and Norma Ainsworth envisioned a brighter future for 'Beckford.' Over the years, they were able to restore the house and surrounding property to its original 18th-century grandeur, while taking painstaking care to keep the historical integrity of the estate intact and, at the same time, make modern changes.

The town of Princess Anne has also had its share of changes, growing from 25 lots with sparse dwellings into a town with a population of over 2,000 and covering approximately a square mile. One aspect of the town that has not changed in over 200 years, however, is the sight of 'Beckford' sitting atop a rise in the landscape, looking as stately as ever.

Beth Carmean is a Nabb Center volunteer. Beth volunteers by transcribing documents, demonstrating her continuing love of local history.

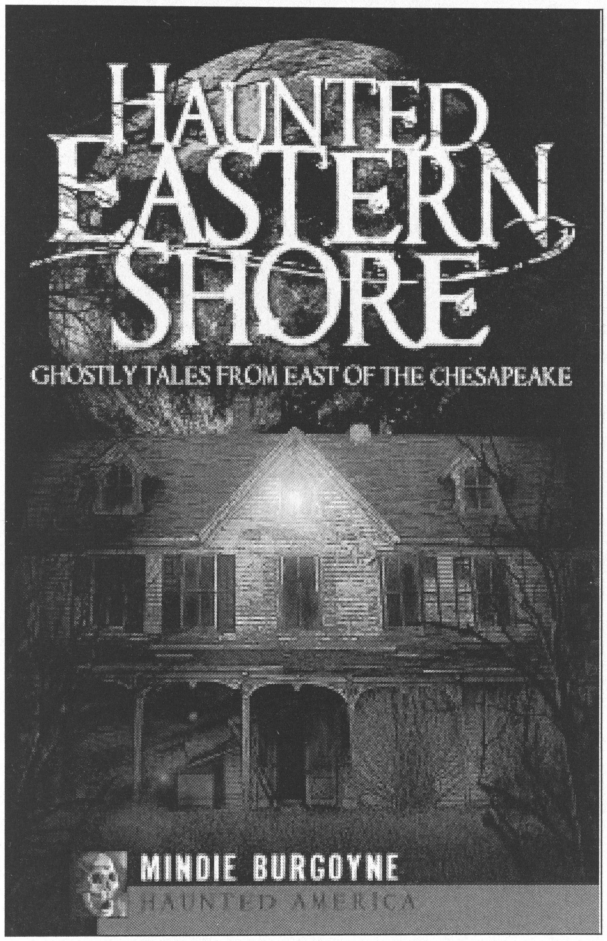
Note: The Nabb Research Center has Freedom Ainsworth's Collection, donated by Mrs. Ainsworth. The collection includes material related to Lankford, as well as other historic homes in Somerset County.

Big Lizz: The Tallest Tale on the Eastern Shore

By Noelle Ford

A forgotten fishing line sends ripples through the muddy water of the Green Briar swamp beneath the DeCoursey Bridge in Cambridge, MD. Swarms of mosquitoes bob between the swamp brushes. Crushed soda cans and crinkled McDonald's napkins decorate the road, forgotten by sunburned fishermen and bored teenagers. There is no marker denoting the legend of the Green Briar swamp. No warning slashed into the road's guardrail: "Watch out for Big Lizz." There is nothing but the lethargic slosh of the swamp and the murmur of insects. And perhaps, the angry moans of a headless slave.

Legend has it that during the Civil War, a woman known as Big Lizz was a slave in Cambridge. Taller than most men, she was her master's favorite. Like many slave-owners, her master feared abolition and was a stern supporter of the Confederacy. To ensure the victory of the South, he smuggled goods from the Union to the Confederacy. Big Lizz informed the Union of her master's actions, becoming a spy for the North. Ultimately, her master discovered that she was a Union scout. Livid, the master decided to rid himself of Big Lizz. He asked Big Lizz to help him hide a small fortune in the swamp. Following him, Big Lizz lugged the box to the swamp and then buried the treasure. Muddy and tired, Big Lizz turned to her master, telling him she was finished. As she turned, her master drew his sword, cut off her head, left her body and then returned to his plantation.



The story of Big Lizz and many others are featured in Mindie Burgoyne's Haunted Eastern Shore: Ghostly Tales from East of the Chesapeake.

The master never returned to the swamp again, eventually dying poor and alone. After his death, many residents insisted they saw weird lights flashing in the swamp. Missing animals and people were said to be with Big Lizz. The site of the DeCoursey Bridge marks Big Lizz's favorite spot to appear. Legend says that she will appear to anyone who parks on the bridge at night, honks three times, flashes his or her headlights and turns off his or her car. This has become a rite of passage in Cambridge. When I visited a friend who lived in Cambridge, we drove out to see if the legend of Big Lizz was, in fact, true. We sat in my friend's car, for nearly 30 minutes without a glimpse of the legendary slave. My friend insisted that she had seen Big Lizz when she was night fishing a few years before. I strained my eyes, squinting into the dark swamp for her silhouette, but she never appeared. My friend shrugged, chuckling that perhaps Big Lizz only appeared to the locals.

Big Lizz's story is just one of the many legends of the Eastern Shore. Hundreds of superstitious stories intertwine with Shore culture. In Dorchester County, the famous Suicide Bridge Restaurant recalls the cursed bridge where many have died. In Wicomico County, curious people visit Poplar Hill Mansion, hoping that they will bear witness to the ghosts who have been known to reside there. Afraid that these stories would be lost over time, Mindie Burgoyne, a Baltimore resident, collected Eastern Shore legends for her book *Haunted Eastern Shore: Ghostly Tales from East of the Chesapeake*. Burgoyne interviewed many residents of the Eastern Shore, recording the genuine ghost stories. Her book includes over 20 legends with pictures and historical background. In time for Halloween, Burgoyne will be reading from *Haunted Eastern Shore* at the Nabb Research Center at 7 p.m. on Monday, October 31. This event is free and open to the public. For reservations or more information, call 410-543-6312.

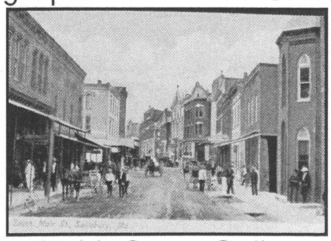
Noelle Ford is an English and Spanish dual major and former Nabb Center intern.

Main Street Salisbury

An Exhibit

August 29, 2011 - May 25, 2012

Discover Main Street Salisbury through artifacts and photographs from Nabb Center archives.



Nabb Center Gallery
410-543-6312
Monday, Wednesday and Friday
1-4 p.m. or by appointment

Salisbury
UNIVERSITY
Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture
1101 Camden Avenue
Salisbury, MD 21801-6861
410-543-6312
E-mail: rcdhac@salisbury.edu

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

non-profit org.
U. S. postage
PAID
Salisbury, Maryland
permit no. 65

Exhibits and Events - Fall 2011

The Eastern Shore Through the Eye of the Photographer
Online Exhibit: Visit
http://nabbhistory.salisbury.edu/archives/exhibits/digitalexhibits.asp
Begins October 3
This online exhibit features images of the Eastern Shore shot by its most famous photographer, Orlando Wootten.

Gallows on the Marsh
Discussion: Nabb Center, Thursday, October 6, 7 p.m.
Local historian Linda Duyer leads a discussion of the book *Gallows on the Marsh* by Brooks Miles Barnes, Ph.D. Gallows tells the story of the 1906 state execution of William Lee, which took place in Somerset County, MD.

Firefest
Exhibit: Nabb Center Gallery, October 17-December 16
On October 17, 1886, Salisbury was decimated by the most powerful fire in city history. Two hundred buildings were destroyed and 22 acres of the center of Salisbury were burned. The exhibit features images of the 1886 fire.

"Mommy, Where Did I Come From?"
Lecture: Nabb Center, Tuesday, October 18, 7 p.m.
Ralph Nelson, president of the Sussex County Genealogical Society, addresses issues with genealogy work and discusses strategies to research family history.

'Haunted Eastern Shore:
Ghostly Tales from East of the Chesapeake'
Reading: Nabb Center, Monday, October 31, 7 p.m.
In time for Halloween, author Mindie Burgoyne thrills readers with stories of Eastern Shore ghosts, direct from her book *Haunted Eastern Shore: Ghostly Tales from East of the Chesapeake.*

I Didn't Bargain For This! By Mitzi Perdue
Reading & Book Signing: Tuesday, November 1,
Perdue Hall 151 & First Floor Lounge, 7 p.m.
Perdue reads highlights from her recent book by the same name, with behind-the-scenes stories of what it took to build the Sheraton Hotel chain and the Perdue poultry company. Admission is $10. Reservations are required. Make checks payable to Salisbury University Foundation, Inc.

The Civil War in Your Attic: Preserving the Legacy of Maryland and the Civil War
Nabb Center, Saturday, November 12, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
The Maryland History and Culture Collaborative, Maryland Digital Cultural Heritage and other representatives, are working to identify and digitize original documents related to the Civil War. Staff will scan your family's Civil War material for inclusion on the Maryland Digital Cultural Heritage Web site. This event is free and open to the public, but appointments are required. For appointments, call 410-543-6312. *Items must be owned by the individual presenting the materials for digitization. Materials that are photocopies and/or subject to U.S. Copyright Law may not be submitted.*

Probate Records
Workshop: Nabb Center, Saturday, November 19, 1 p.m.
Discuss various probate records, including wills, administration bonds, letters testamentary, letters of administration, inventories, accounts of sales and administration accounts. Visuals and handouts help researchers discover the values of these significant sources. This is the first in a series of workshops on original records. Fee: $15 for members; $20 for non-members. For reservations, call 410-543-6312.

Civil War Medicine and its Impact on Healthcare Today
Lecture: Wicomico Room, Guerrieri University Center,
Monday, December 5, 7 p.m.
Dr. William Campbell speaks about the advances in medicine made during the Civil War era. Examining modern medicine in comparison to Civil War treatments, he explores how the vast number of sick or dying soldiers forced doctors to create inventive treatments. This is a Cultural Laureate event.